

# University Avenue Business Outreach Survey



## Summary of Results

With the development of Light Rail Transit (LRT) on University Avenue coming closer to a reality, it is especially important to reach out to the 1,000+ businesses along the Avenue. From September to November of 2005, the Saint Paul Department of Planning and Economic Development (PED), working in cooperation with the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority, the Midway Chamber of Commerce, and the Central Corridor Partnership, attempted to contact and survey all of the businesses along University Avenue through personal visits, phone calls, and by mail. The purpose of the business survey was to establish a positive rapport with the businesses on the Avenue, listen to individual business concerns, and also inform owners about LRT.

The businesses were divided into two groups—those with storefronts on the Avenue, and those located in large office buildings along the Avenue. A mailer that included the survey and basic information about LRT was sent to all businesses with a University address. PED staff personally visited the storefront businesses to collect completed surveys, or complete the survey by interviewing the business owners. Business owners in the large office buildings were asked to complete the survey and mail it back to PED. A survey completion rate of 51% was achieved for the storefront businesses. For the businesses in the large office buildings, such as Court International, Griggs Midway, and Spruce Tree Center, the survey completion rate was 7%. A total of 253 surveys were completed.



## Survey Highlights\*

- 61% of businesses lease their space and 39% own their properties.
- 63% of businesses reported that their customers come from more than 3 miles away.
- 40% of businesses have plans to expand in the next 3 years.
- The top three concerns cited by owners about their business' current location were parking (mentioned by 39%), litter/graffiti/vandalism (mentioned by 31%), and robbery or other serious crime (mentioned by 27%).
- When asked to comment on the possibility of LRT, 47% mentioned concerns about difficult access for customers during construction, and 27% mentioned concern about the potential elimination of on-street parking after construction.
- 95% of businesses are either "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with doing business on University Avenue.
- Based upon their comments, survey staff categorized business owners' general attitudes towards LRT. 28% of owners responded favorably toward LRT, 50% were ambiguous or had some concerns and questions; and 17% were definitely opposed to LRT.

\* The full report with complete survey results can be found at  
<http://www.stpaul.gov/depts/ped/universitybusoutreach>